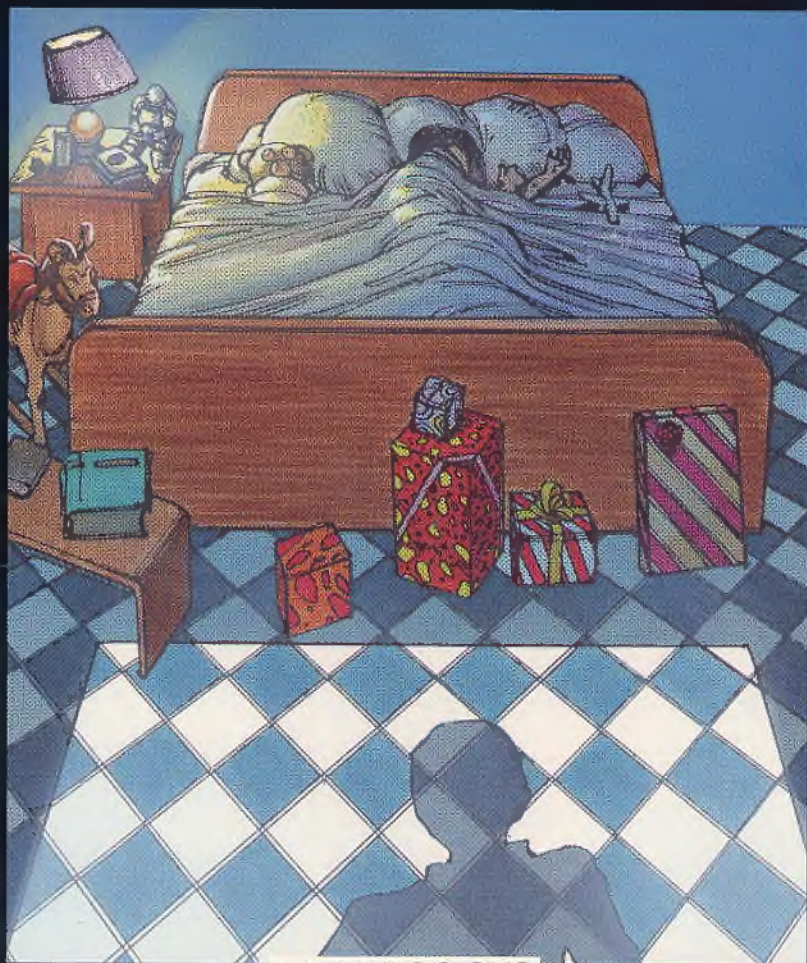




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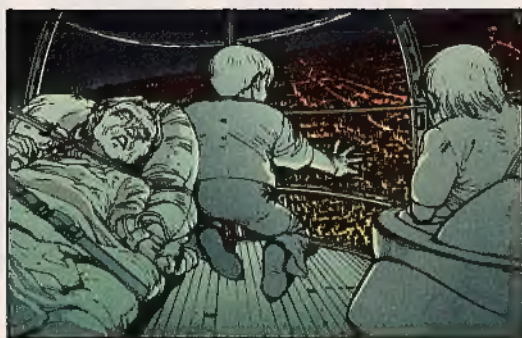
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AKIRA

BY KATSUHIRO OTOMO

CHAPTER 14

CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

The year is 2030. The world is rebuilding from World War III. In **Neo-Tokyo**, plans are being made to hold the next Olympics in the "old city"—where, thirty-eight years before, the first of the bombs fell. There, a band of teenaged delinquents led by **Kaneda** encounter **Number 26**—a terrified child who possesses extraordinary telekinetic abilities. During the encounter, the paranormal boy gravely injures **Tetsuo**, one of Kaneda's close friends, then mysteriously vanishes.

As a result **Kaneda** and **Tetsuo** become entangled in a power struggle between a mysterious military and scientific organization led by a man known only as the **Colonel** and an underground resistance group, bent on putting a stop to the Colonel's activities.

Among the resistance, **Kaneda** meets **Kay**—a girl he alternately maddens and tries to seduce—and Kay's "brother" **Ryu**. The resistance leaders include Ryu's superior, Nezu—

who publicly leads the political party that opposes the government—and a powerful religious leader with strong precognitive gifts, **Lady Miyako**.

Under his control, the **Colonel** has a number of children, each one possessing a distinct set of psychic talents and identified by a number marked on the hand. (**Lady Miyako** was, at one time, Number 19 in this series.) One of the children is the mental giant **Akira**, so powerful that since the war he has been buried beneath the earth's surface, suspended in cryogenic sleep.

The Colonel's staff subjects **Tetsuo** to painful experiments which awaken his tremendous telepathic potential. **Tetsuo** is redubbed **Number 41**. Unfortunately, as his powers appear, a monstrous side of Tetsuo's nature also surfaces. Able to shrug off the most serious injuries, **Tetsuo** goes on a killing spree, murdering one of Kaneda's friends and even attacking **Kaneda**.

Unable to tolerate the notion that **Akira** may be more powerful than he is, **Tetsuo** sets out to find his rival. The psychic children, who, like **Lady Miyako**



Akira



Sakaki



Kay



Nezu



fear Akira's power and worry about the disaster **Tetsuo** may unleash. The children use their talents to help **Kay** and **Kaneda** follow **Tetsuo** to the Olympic site, below which **Akira** rests. There, they are almost reunited with **Ryu**, who is working undercover as a soldier.

Hoping to prevent a disaster, the **Colonel** follows with his troops and scientists. **Tetsuo** easily repels soldiers armed with the most sophisticated weaponry. Meanwhile, the scientists monitoring Akira's cryosleep surmise that even in hibernation, Akira's power is responding to Tetsuo's psychic energy.

Tetsuo reaches Akira's resting place, the cryonic chamber begins to crack from within. **Akira** emerges, as **Kay** and **Kaneda** watch from hiding.

The paranormal giant is

still dazed and weak with the aftereffects of his coma. **Akira** is unable to speak, shy of bright lights, and easily ordered about. **Tetsuo** and he begin to make their way to the surface, followed by **Kay** and **Kaneda**.

Terrified of what may occur, the **Colonel** summons the powerful SQL military satellite and orders that its laser cannon be fired at **Tetsuo** and **Akira**, who are separated by the blasts. **Akira** is saved by **Kay** and **Kaneda**, but **Tetsuo** is less fortunate. The laser strikes his left arm.

Neo-Tokyo is placed in a state of military emergency. The Army is backed up by "caretaker robots" who patrol the streets, dealing harshly with looters and restoring order. The **Colonel**—who successfully manages to conceal the truth about what has occurred despite leaks—plans to



Kaneda



Kiyoko



The Colonel



Chiyoko

use the emergency as an excuse to hunt down and destroy the resistance once and for all. Discredited and made a scapegoat following the disaster, the **Colonel** sets up a clandestine inner circle of military and intelligence officials still loyal to him, a circle **Nezu** is determined to expose.

Lady Miyako divines that **Nezu** can no longer be trusted. She calls upon **Sakaki**, a young girl trained in techniques of infiltration, observation, and combat. **Lady Miyako** asks her to find **Akira**.

Kay and **Kaneda** take shelter with **Chiyo**, a formidable woman in the resistance. Without **Kaneda's** knowledge, **Kay** meets with **Nezu** and agrees to turn the still-somnolent **Akira** over to **Nezu**. When **Ryu**, unaware of what has occurred since he last saw **Kay**, also reports to **Nezu**. He treats **Ryu** scornfully, denies all knowledge of **Kay**, and does not tell him anything about **Akira**.

Sakaki has followed **Kay** from her meeting with **Nezu** to **Chiyo's** hideout. She slips in and takes **Akira**. **Kaneda** is unable to stop her and he alerts **Kay** and **Chiyo**.

The pair safely reach the

street only to be cornered by caretaker robots. **Kay**, **Chiyo** and **Kaneda** arrive in time to save them. **Sakaki** is stunned by a robot, the trio recovers **Akira**.

Despite warnings from **Lady Miyako** not to overestimate himself, **Nezu** plans to exploit **Akira** for his own purposes. He awaits the delivery of the paranormal child. **Kay** brings **Akira**, **Kaneda** and **Chiyo** to a rendezvous on **Nezu's** boat. He whisks the paranormal boy away by helicopter, and orders his staff to kill the three resistance fighters. They manage to save themselves and take control of the boat, and by a trick learn where the copter has taken **Akira**.

Meanwhile **Nezu**, rushing to where he has **Akira** hidden, is caught breaking curfew by soldiers who open fire upon his car!



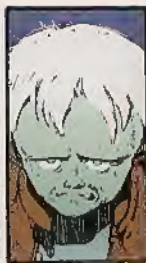
Tetsuo



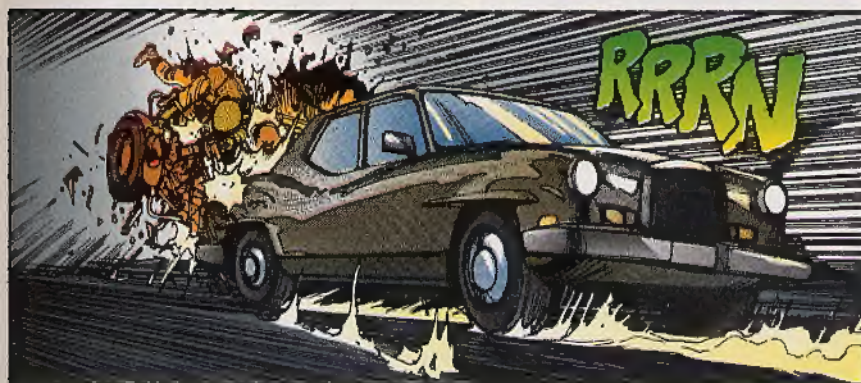
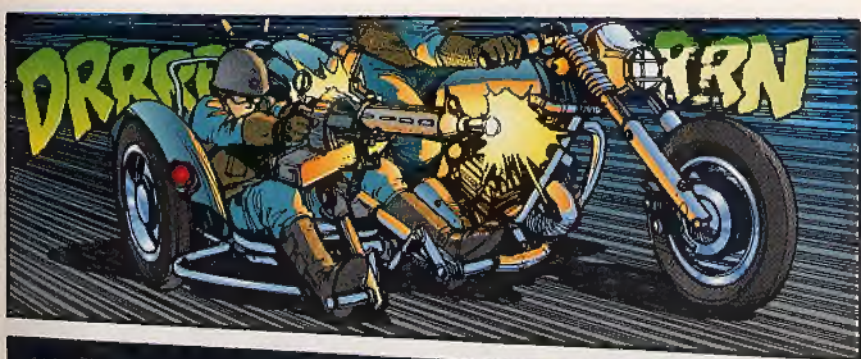
Masaru

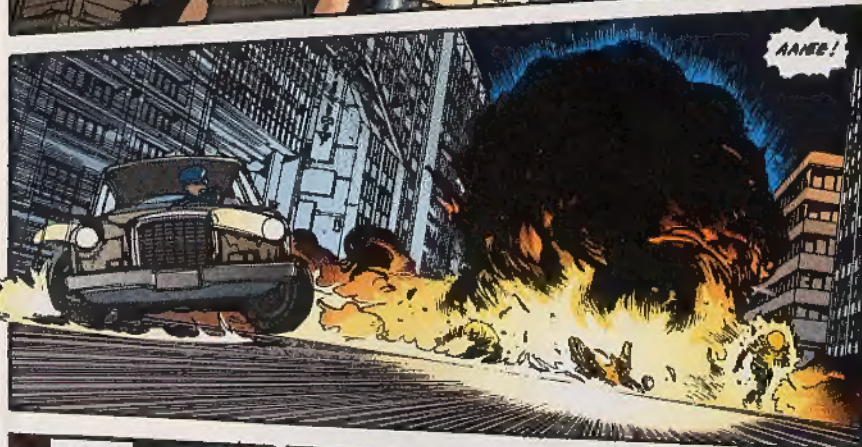


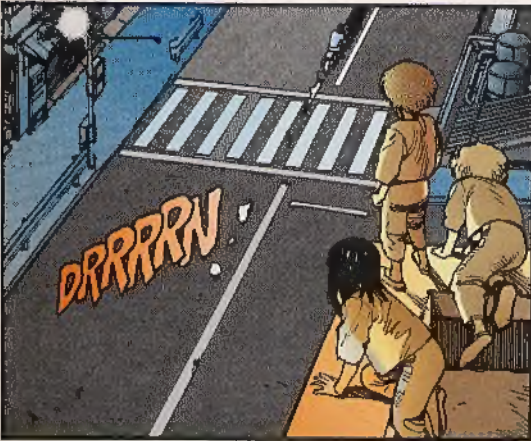
Lady Miyako

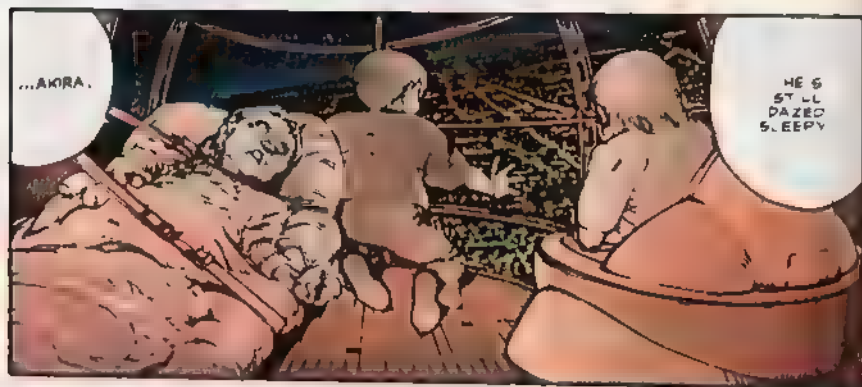


Takashi









buddabuddabudda

grn

GRN

ENTERING
THE
ELEVENTH
DISTRICT,
SIR.

COMPANY
HALT!

WE'LL
ESTABLISH
THE
BRIDGE-
HEAD
HERE!

THIS IS WHERE THEY EXPECT
THE FORCES WHO OPPOSE
THE COLONEL TO CLASH WITH
THE TROOPS THAT ARE
SUPPORTING HIM.

THERE MAY BE
NO WAY TO AVOID
A CONFRONTATION.

I HEARD THAT
NEGOTIATIONS
ARE STILL
GOING ON.

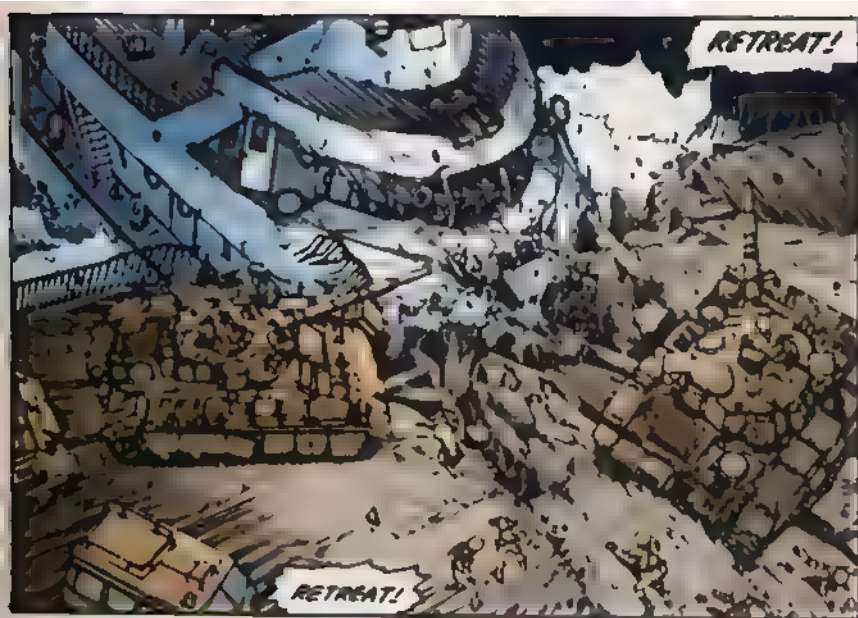
HLNH?

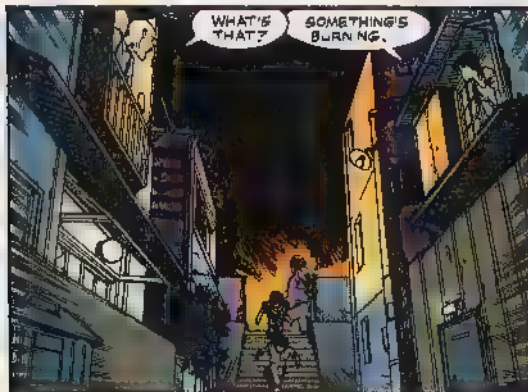
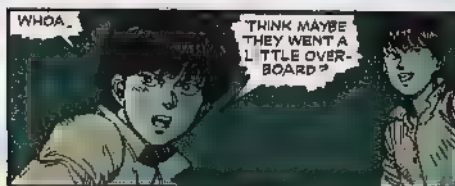
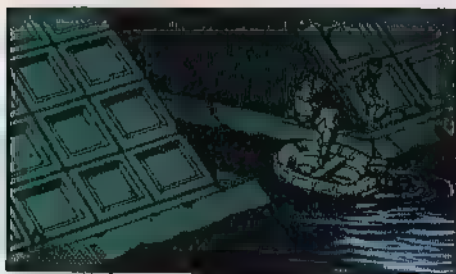
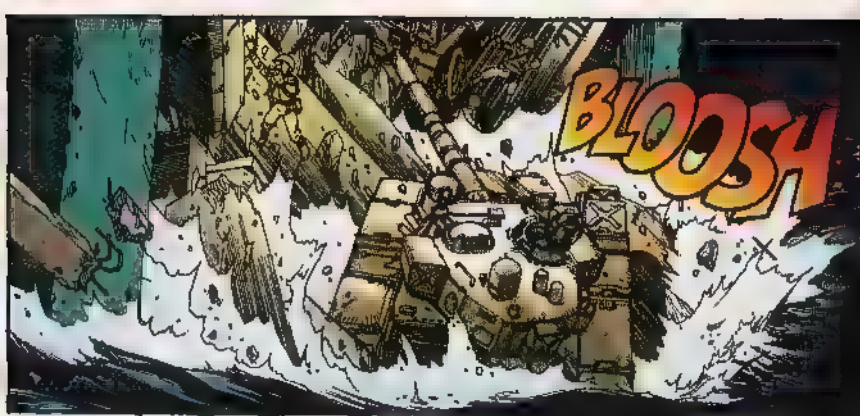
WHAT
IN...?

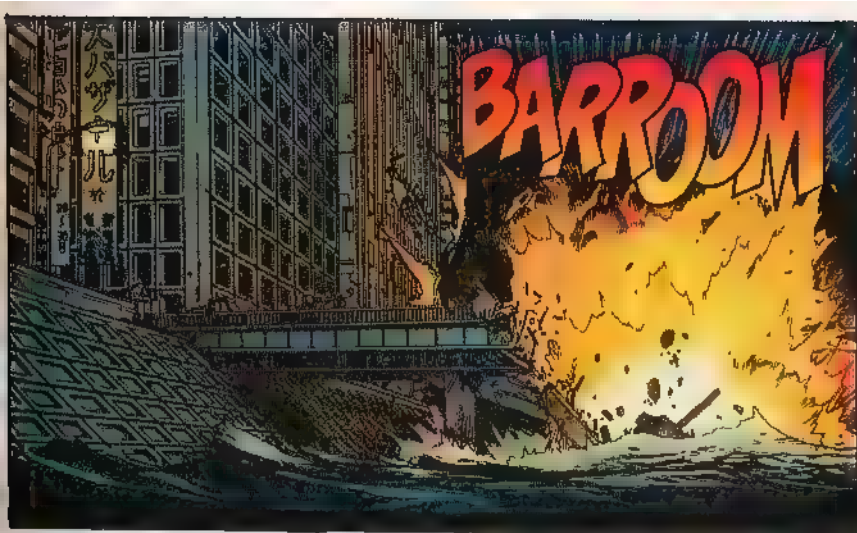
WHAT
TH...?

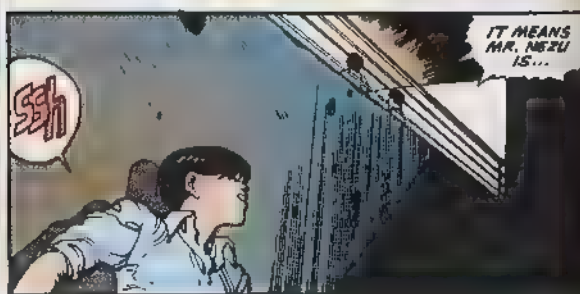
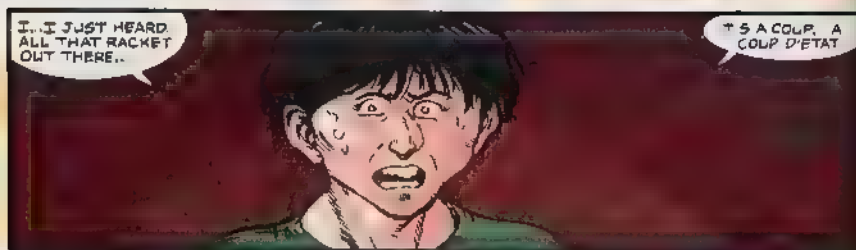
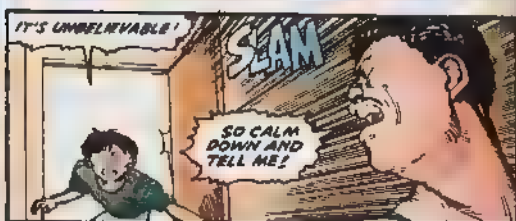
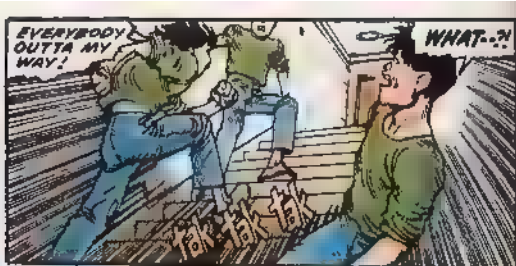
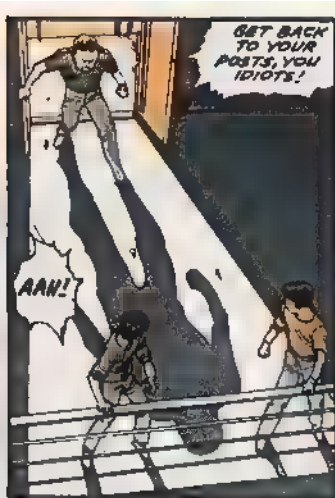
A B--

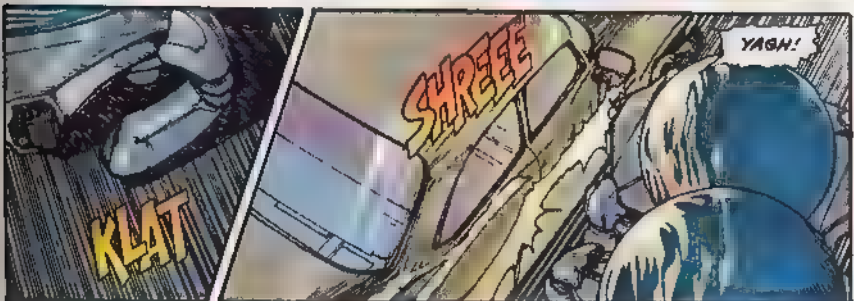
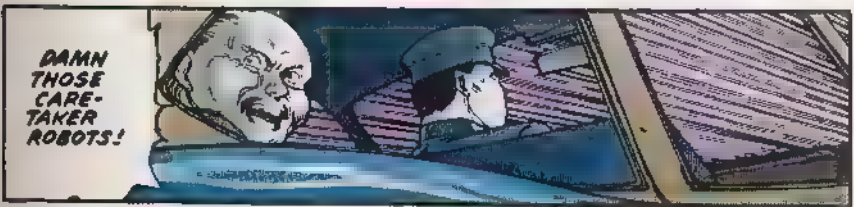
--BOAT!











REEE

KRAK

14

36

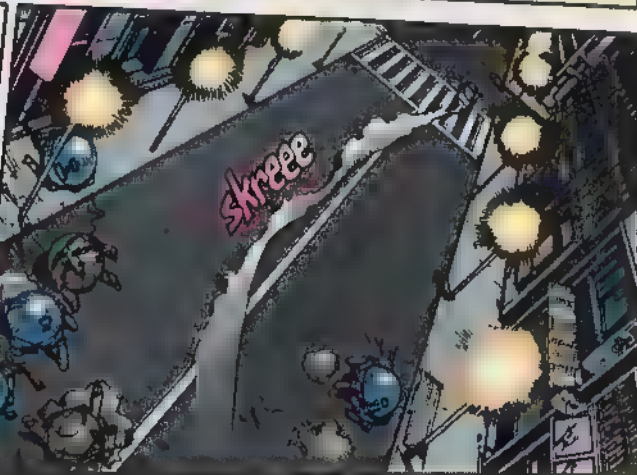
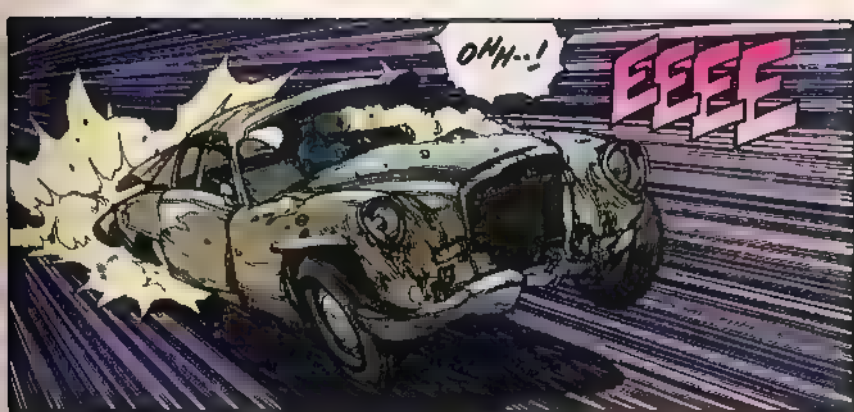
THEY'RE
CRUSHING
US!

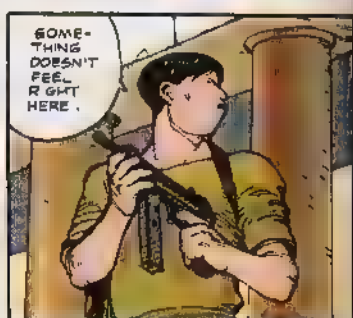
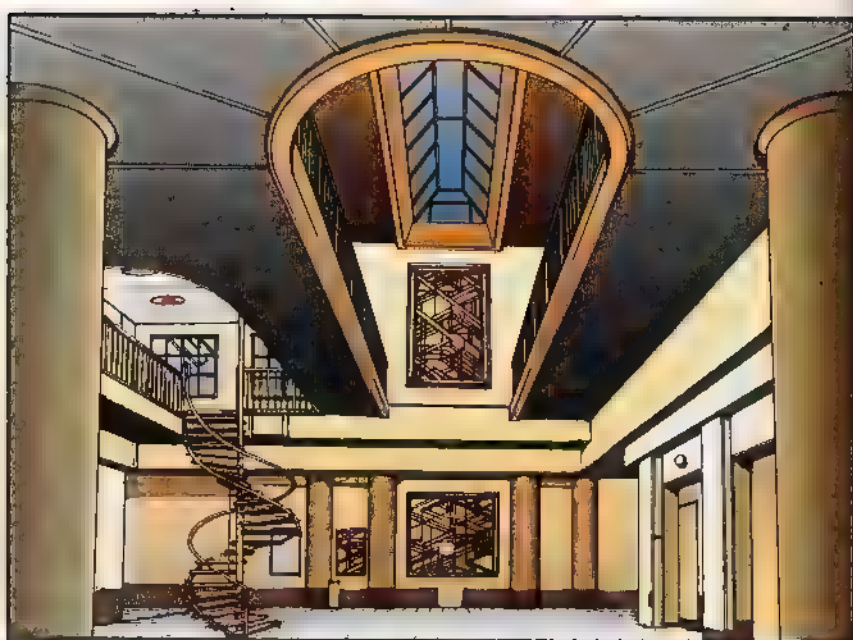
HOLD
ON,
MA'NNU!

WHAT?

THOP

SKREEE







FOLLOW THE
LEADER...



... RIGHT TO...

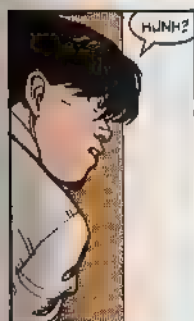


... HERE.



THREE GUARDS
JUST FOR .. ?

NO, FOUR
GUARDS



HUHH?



HEY, SOMETHING
BIG IS UP!

TAK
TAK
TAK

SOMETHING
HAPPENED TO
MR. NEZU!

HIS CAR WAS ATTACKED
BY THE SAME GUYS WHO'RE
TRYING TO OVERTHROW
THE GOVERNMENT!

WHAT?!

ARE
YOU
SURE?!

WE'RE LOOKING FOR
VOLUNTEERS TO
GET THE GUYS
THAT DID IT!

I'M IN!

LET'S
ALL
GO!

NO, WAIT! SOMEONE
HAS TO STAY ON
DUTY HERE!

HE'S RIGHT

FINE. YOU
STAY!

NO
WAY!

EVERYONE WHO'S GOING,
JOIN THE GROUP IN THE
BALLROOM. I'M GONNA
LET THE REST OF THE
MEN KNOW.

RIGHT...

LET'S GIVE
THOSE
BASTARDS
WHAT'S
COMING TO
THEM.

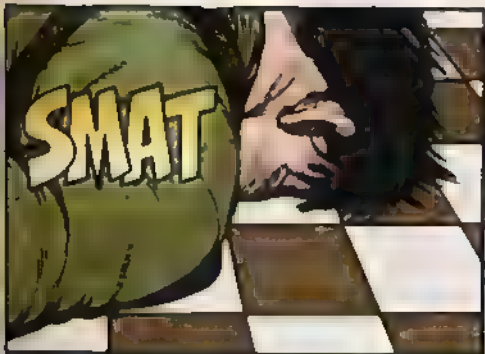
MOVE
IT.

HOW COME I NEVER
GET TO GO? IT'S
NOT FAIR!

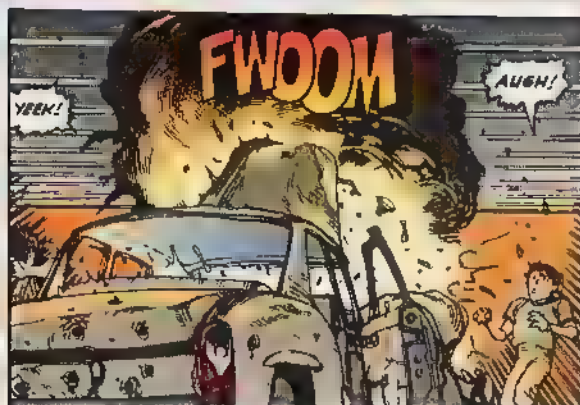
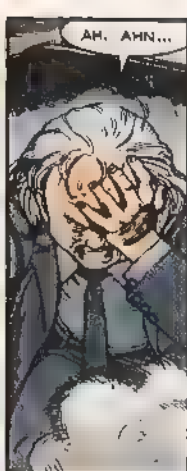
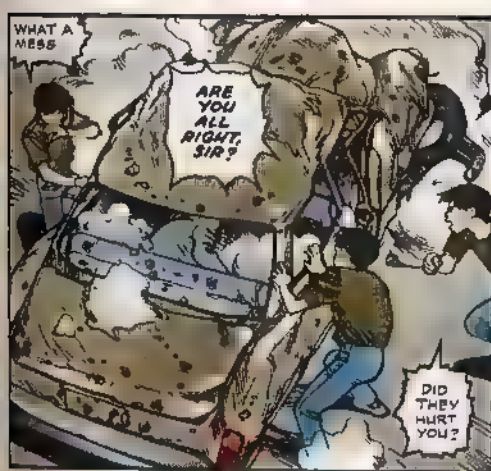
BECAUSE
LADY MIYAKO
SAYS SO.

JUST BECAUSE
I'M STUPID...

I ALWAYS
GET LEFT
OUT!







YOW!

GET AN
EXTINGUISHER!

PUT IT
OUT!

rrrr

rrrr rrrr rrrr

THE BASTARD'S
OWN HOME...

A W O O O O

AS OF ONE A.M. A
PROVISIONAL
GOVERNMENT
DEDICATED TO
MILITARY
SECURITY
WILL BE IN
CONTROL OF THE
NATION...

UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE THE
EXISTING ADMINISTRATION AND
ALL THE TERMS OF OUR
CONSTITUTION ARE
HEREBY SUSPENDED.



AT EIGHT
O'CLOCK
TOMORROW
MORNING...

THE
PROVISIONAL
REG ME
WILL ISSUE A
STATEMENT
CONTAINING
FURTHER
DE-
TAILS.

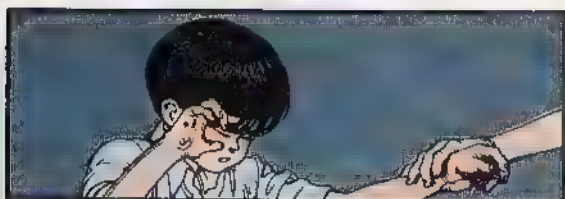


THIS HAS BEEN A
PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCE-
MENT BROUGHT TO YOU BY
THE PROVISIONAL
REG ME.



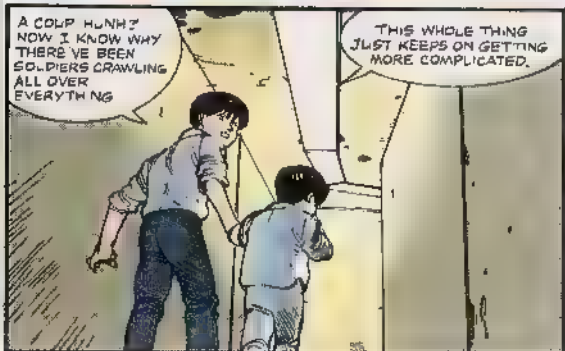
THIS ANNOUNCEMENT
WILL BE REPEATED
EVERY FIFTEEN
MINUTES

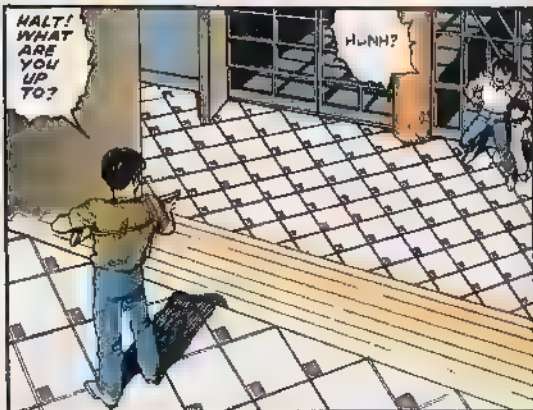
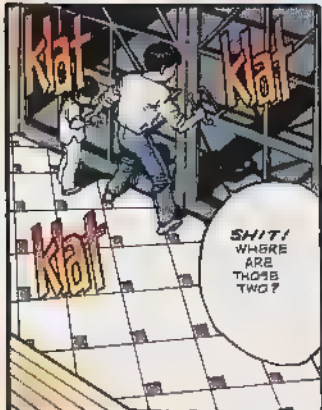
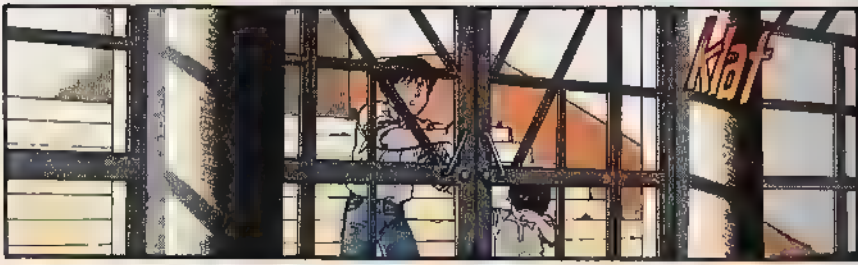
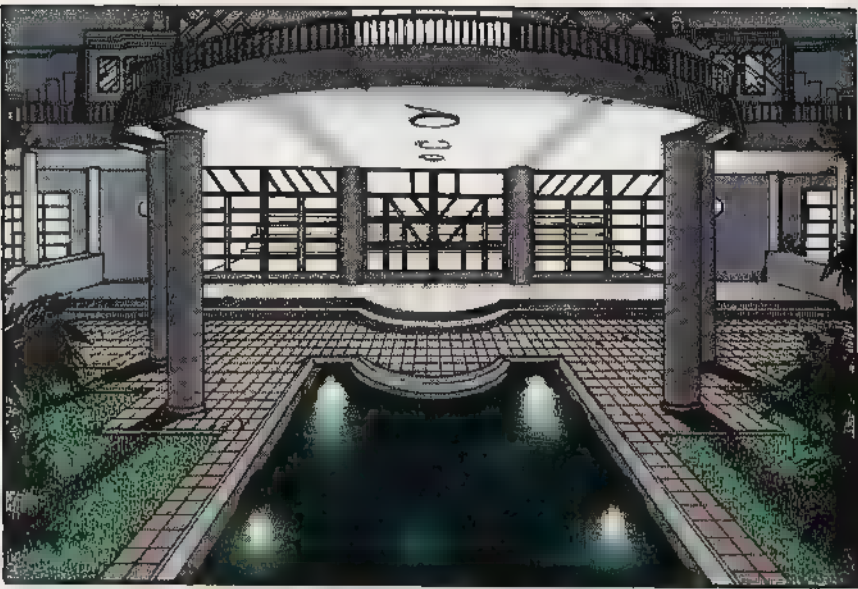
WHAT DO
YOU THINK
OF THAT?

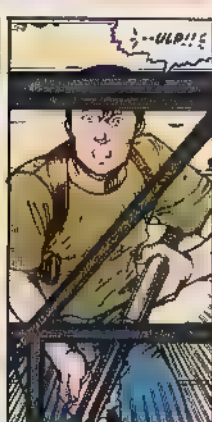
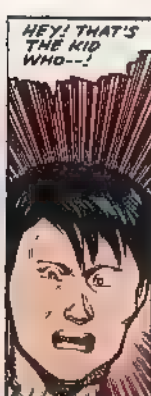


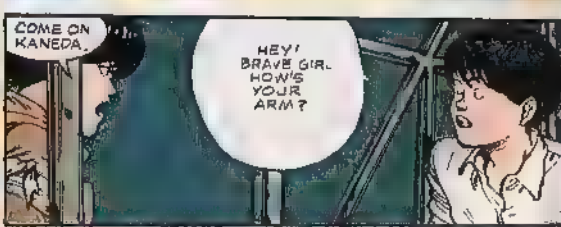
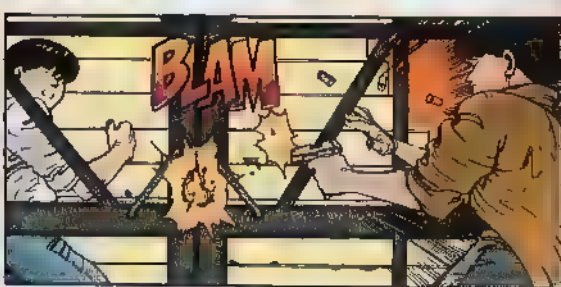
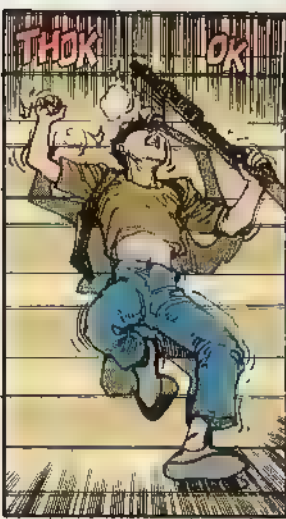
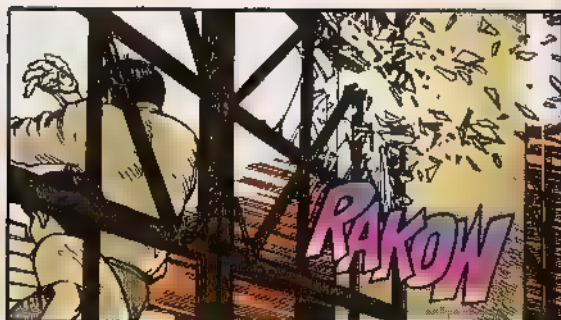
A COUP HUNH?
NOW I KNOW WHY
THERE'VE BEEN
SOLDIERS CRAWLING
ALL OVER
EVERYTHING

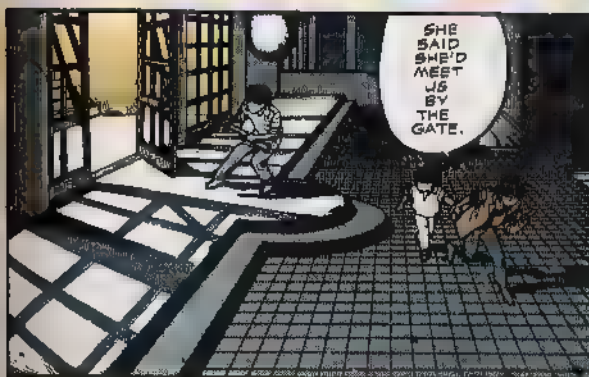
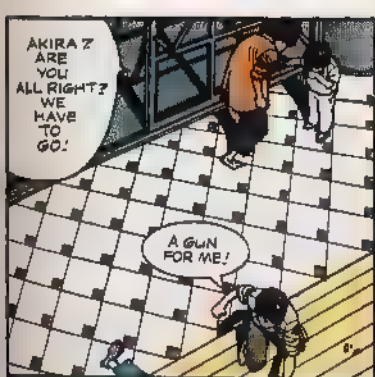
THIS WHOLE THING
JUST KEEPS ON GETTING
MORE COMPLICATED.

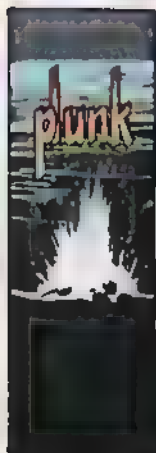
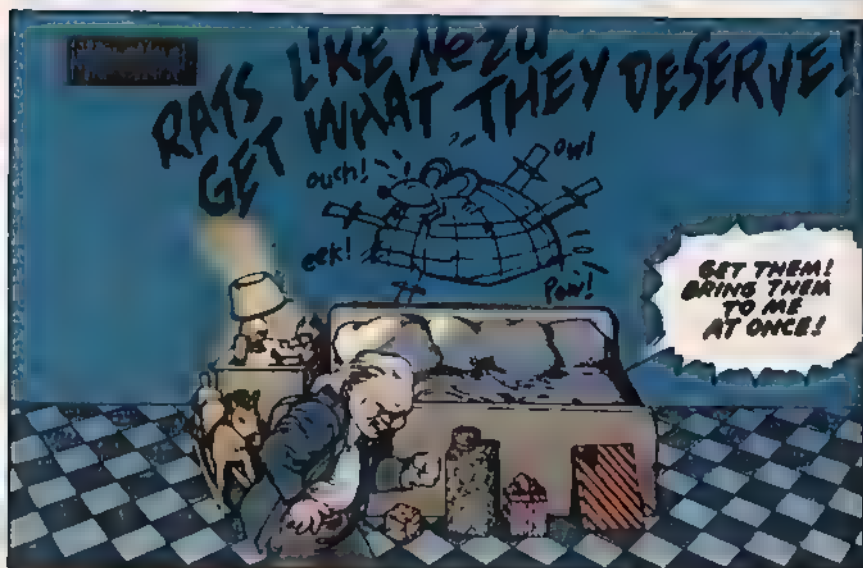
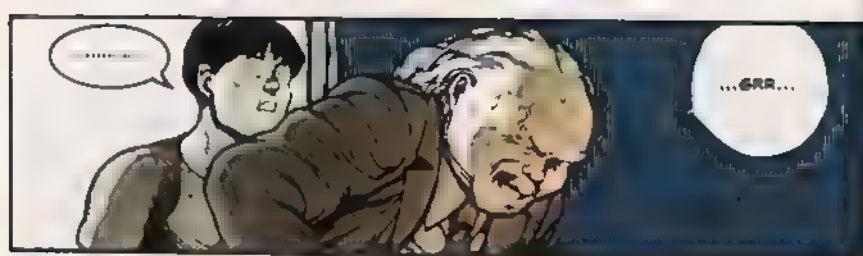


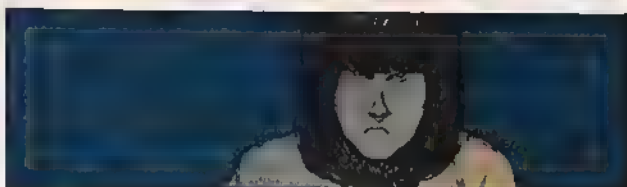
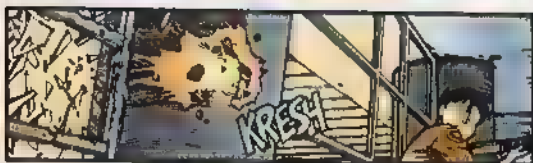


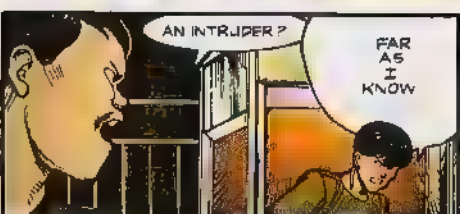


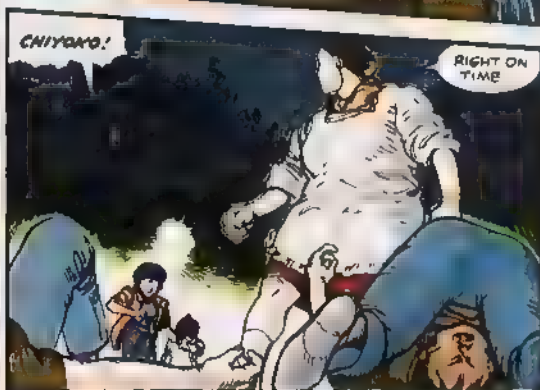
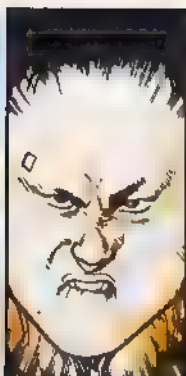


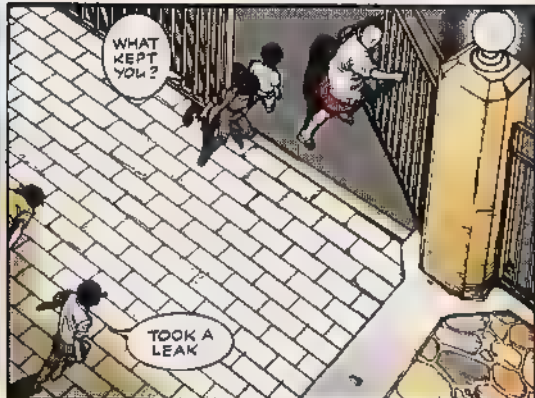


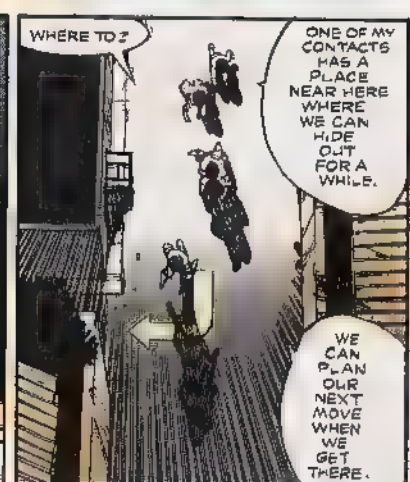












DID YOU SAY
THERE'D BEEN
A COUP?

THAT'S
WHAT I
HEARD

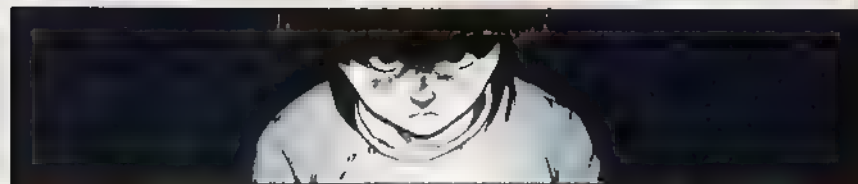
I WONDER
IF THAT
COLONEL



I'VE
BEEN
WONDERING
THE
SAME
THING



I
WOULDN'T
PUT
ANY-
THING
PAST
THAT
BIG
APE



YOU AGAIN?
DON'T YOU
KNOW WHEN
TO QUIT?



BE CAREFUL!



AFTER WHAT WE WENT
THROUGH TO GET THIS
KID BACK WE'RE NOT
ABOUT TO LET YOU
TAKE HIM AWAY FROM
US!

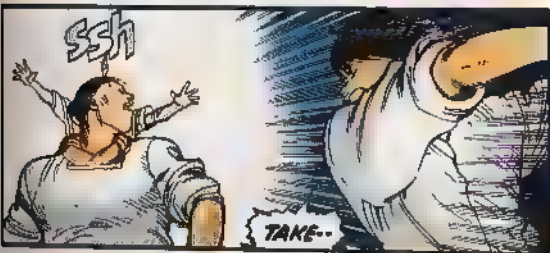


!

tok



HEY!



ssh

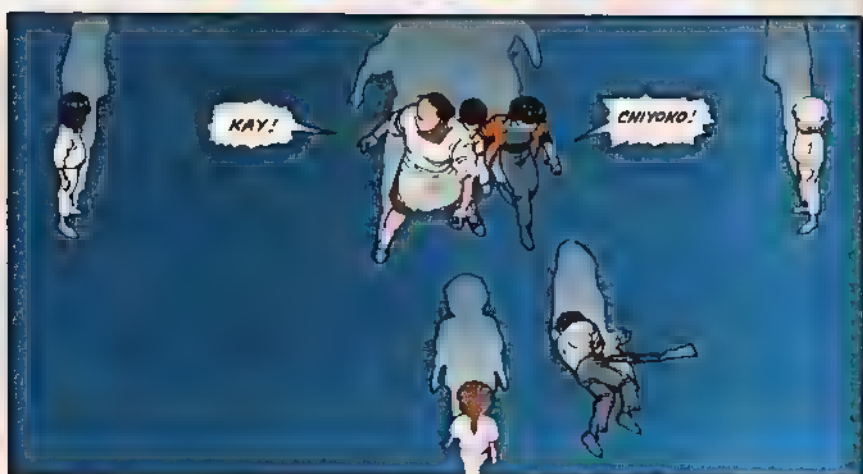
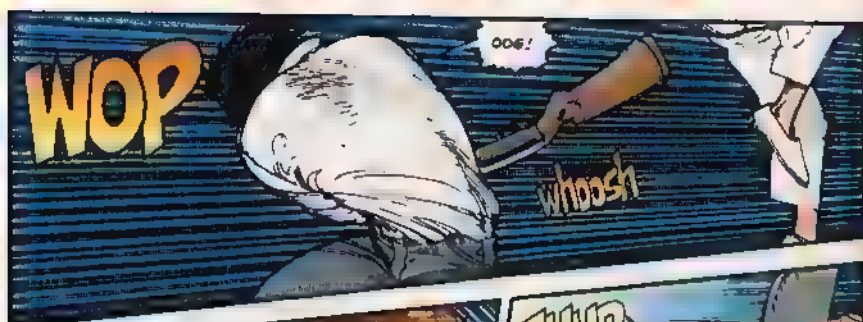
TAKE--

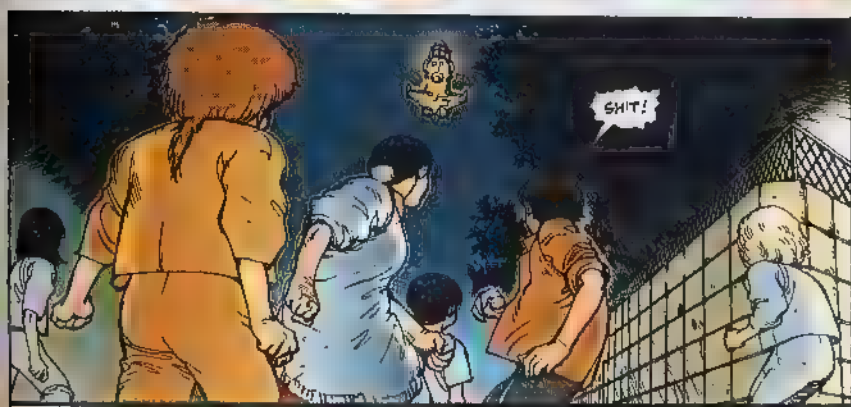
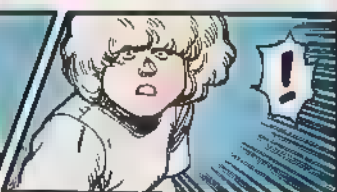
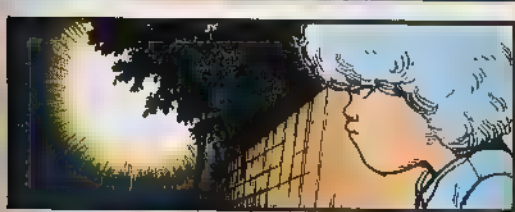


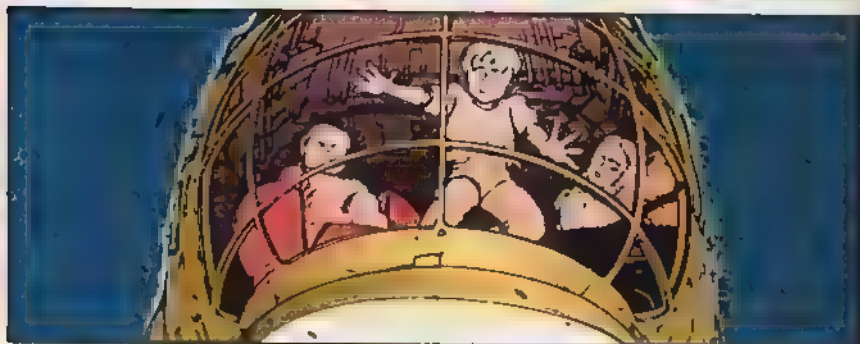
--THAT!



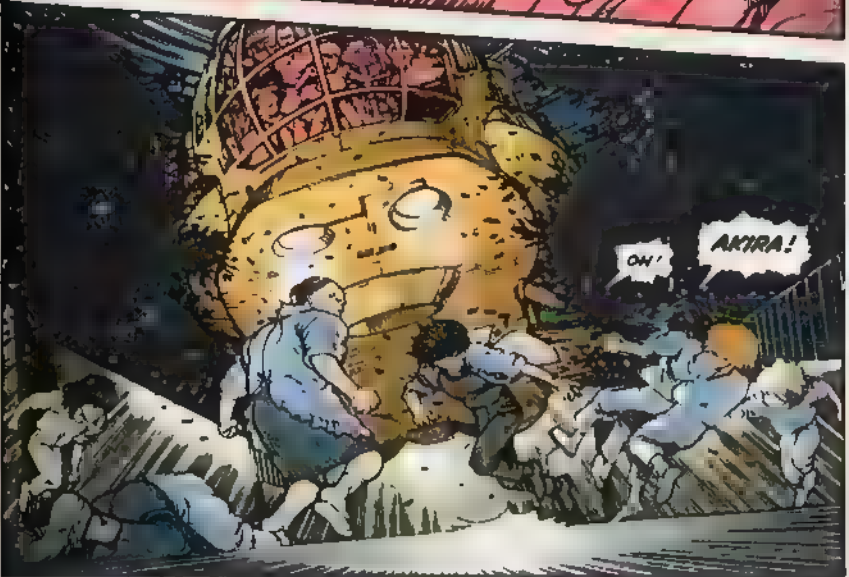
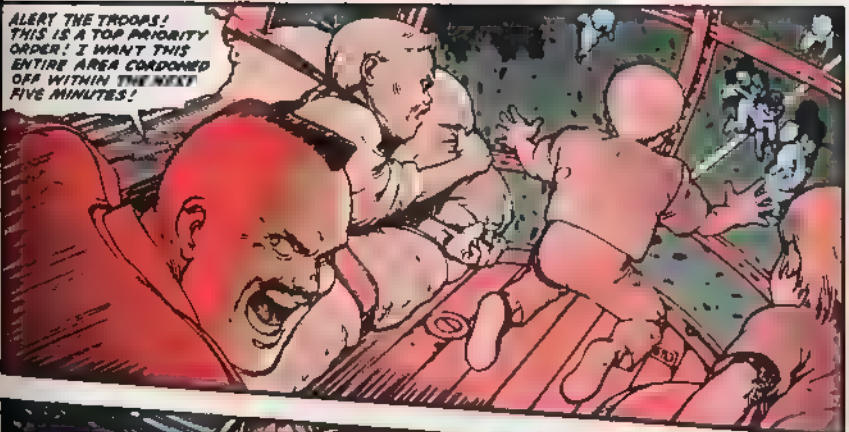
ssh





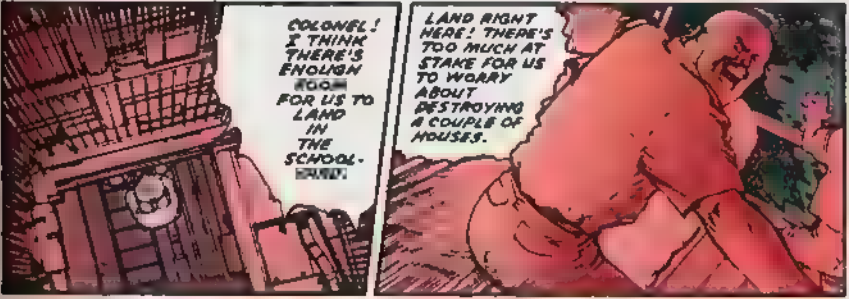


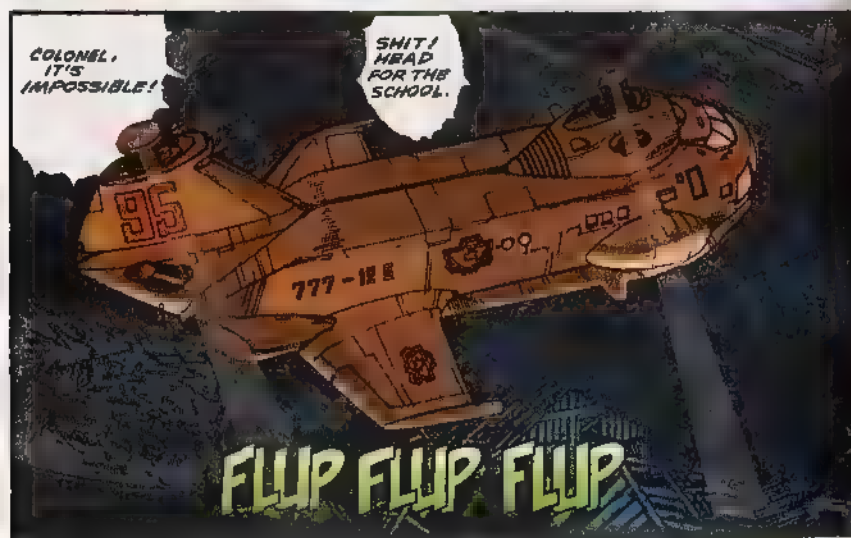
ALERT THE TROOPS!
THIS IS A TOP PRIORITY
ORDER! I WANT THIS
ENTIRE AREA CORDONED
OFF WITHIN THE NEXT
FIVE MINUTES!



COLONEL!
I THINK
THERE'S
ENOUGH
ROOM
FOR US TO
LAND
IN
THE
SCHOOL-
HOUSE!

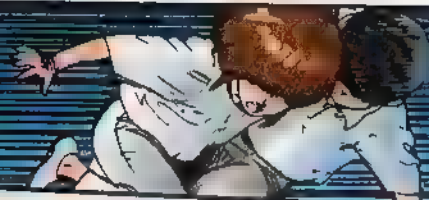
LAND RIGHT
HERE! THERE'S
TOO MUCH AT
STAKE FOR US
TO WORRY
ABOUT
DESTROYING
A COUPLE OF
HOUSES.





MIKI!

MOZU!



HERE I...



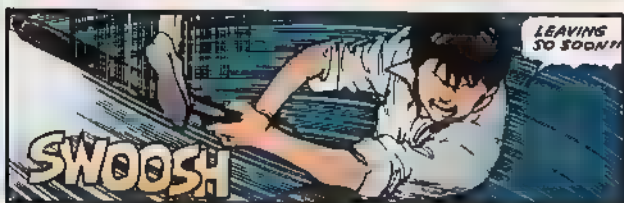
...COME

!



LEAVING
SO SOON!!

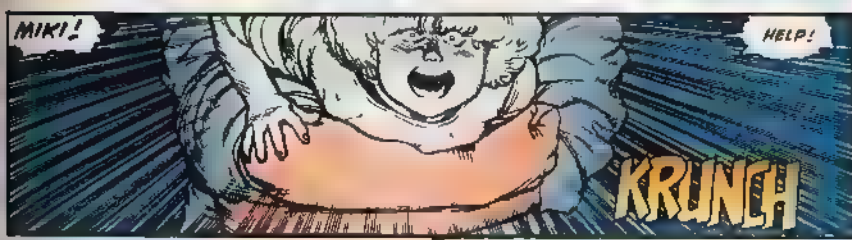
SWOOSH

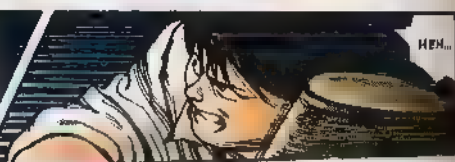


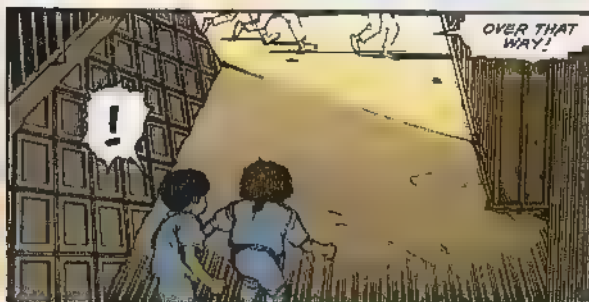
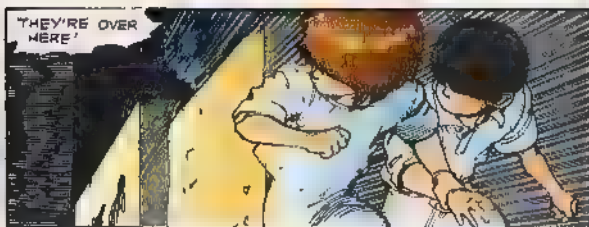
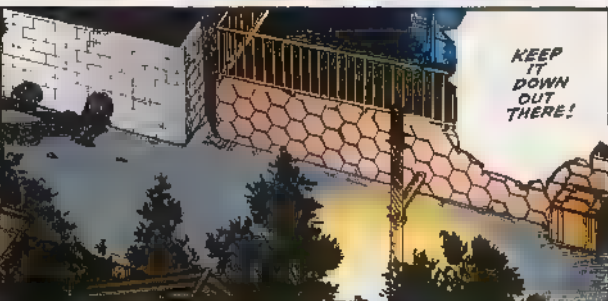
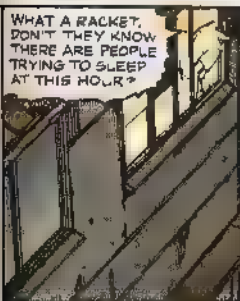
MIKI!

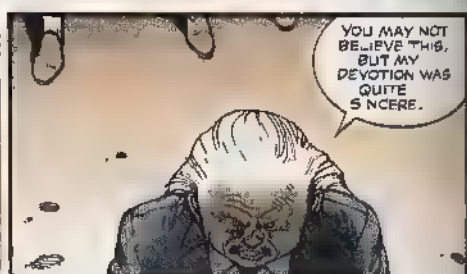
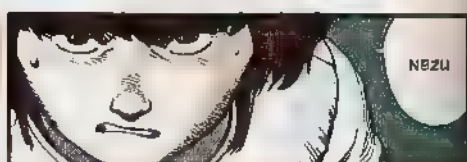
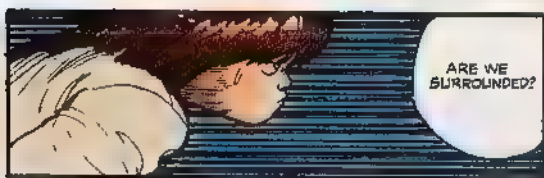
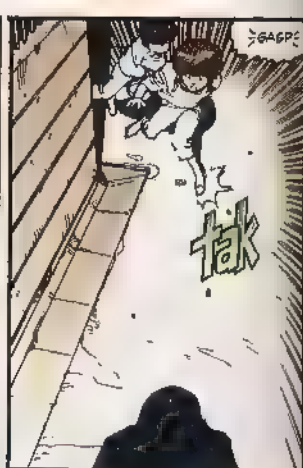
HELP!

KRUNCH











OOH...
THAT ROTTEN
KID...



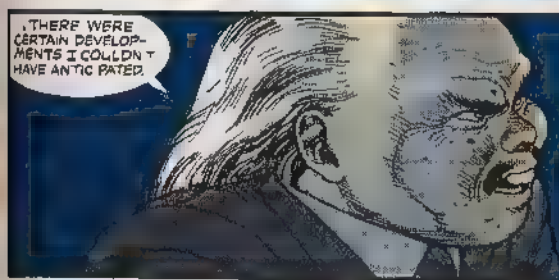
...NEXT
TIME,
FOR
SURE...



HUHH?



HOWEVER...



..THERE WERE
CERTAIN DEVELOP-
MENTS I COULDN'T
HAVE ANTICIPATED.



..DEVELOPMENTS THAT
MAKE IT QUITE IMPOSSIBLE
FOR ME TO RELINQUISH AKIRA
AT THE PRESENT TIME, AT
SOME LATER DATE..

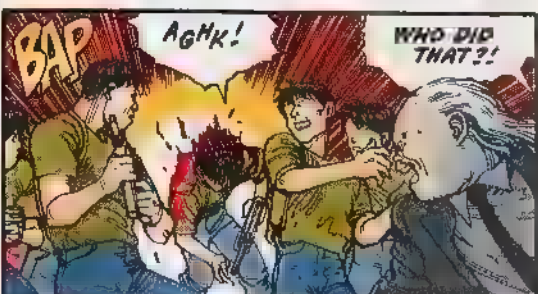


...I HOPE
PERSONALLY
TO GO
BEFORE
LADY MINAKO
AND BEG HER
PARDON.



Snap

BE CAREFUL
NOT TO HIT
AKIRA



BAP

AGHK!

WHO DID
THAT?!

YAAAH!

RUN
SAKAKI!

MIKI!

KILL THOSE
MEDDLERS!

TOKKA

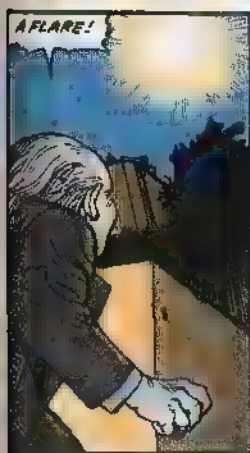
TOKKA

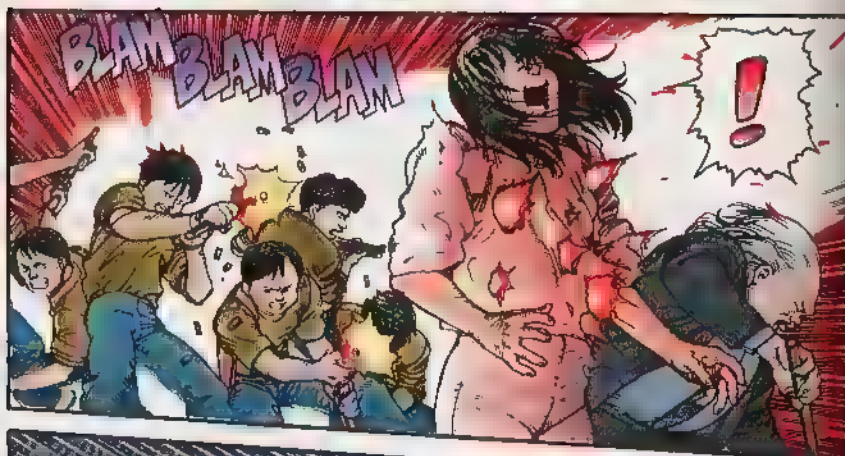
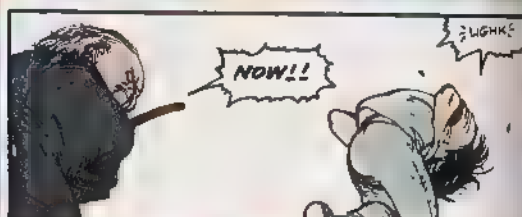
WAAAH!

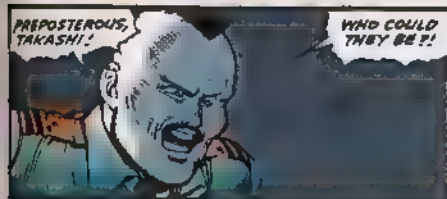
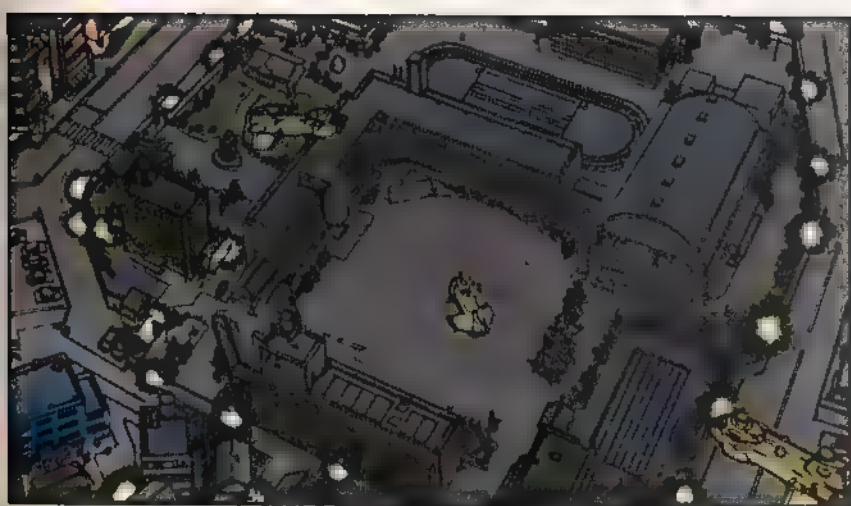
SHE'S
A R
BORNE!

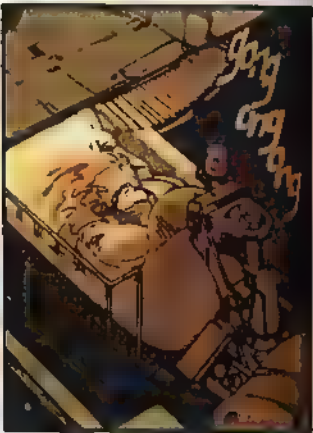
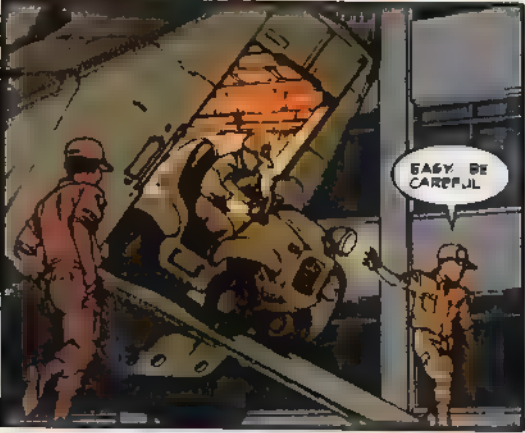
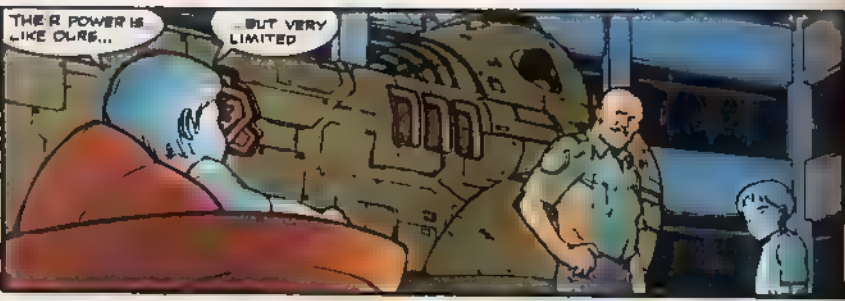
GASP!

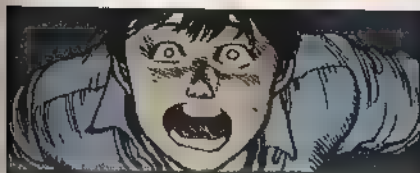
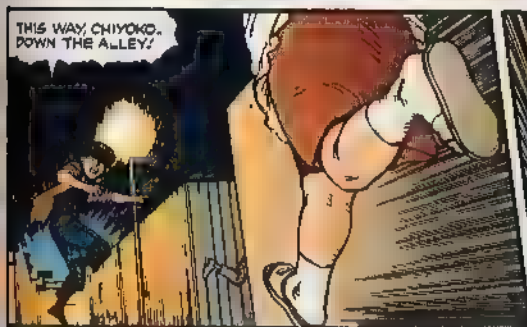
NOO!

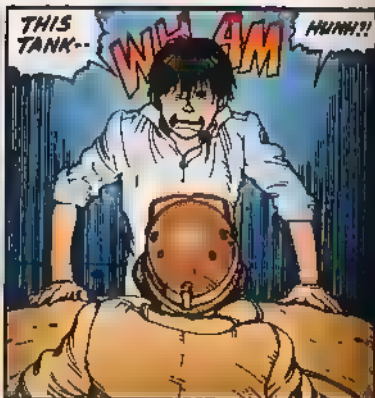


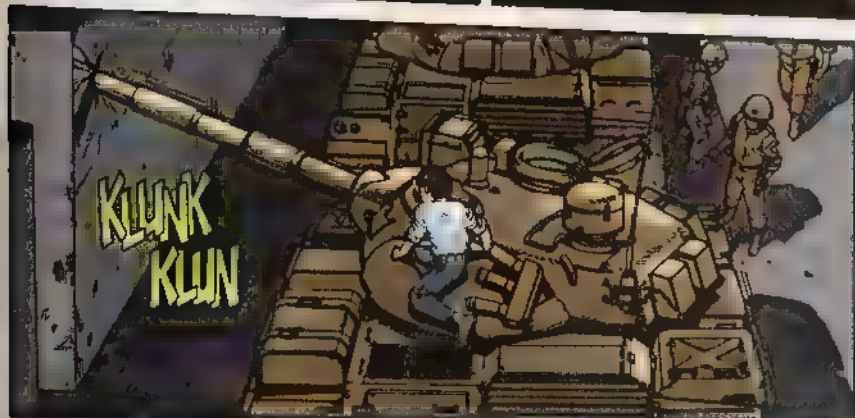
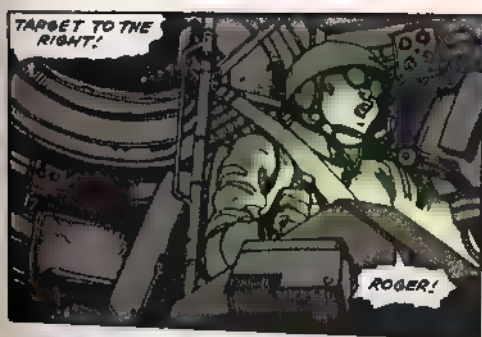












FIRE
AT
WHAT,
SIR?

BUT, COMMANDER...
THAT'S A HOUSE

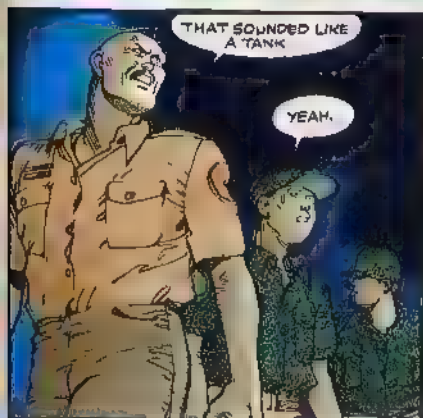
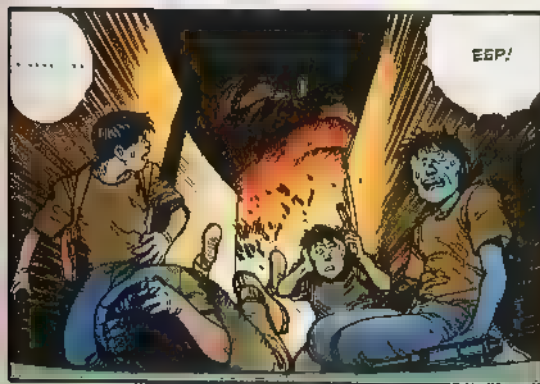
THIS IS A WARNING SHOT.
WE'VE GOT TO RESTORE
ORDER. I'LL TAKE FULL
RESPONSIBILITY.

FRONT
AND
CENTER!

FIRE!

BOOM

BOOM





KAY!
CHIYOKO!
OVER
HERE!

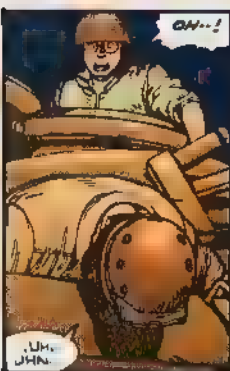


KANEDA!



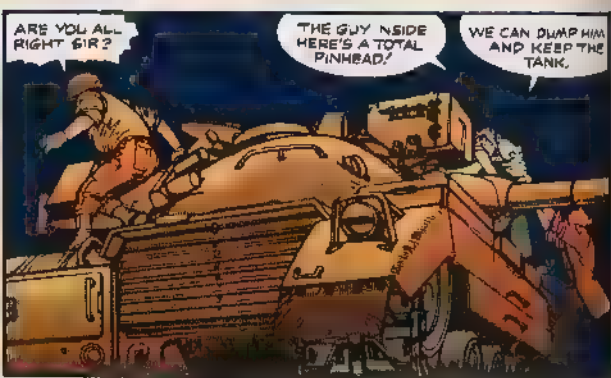
HURRY!
HURRY
UP!

WHERE ARE YOU
COMMANDER?



OH--!

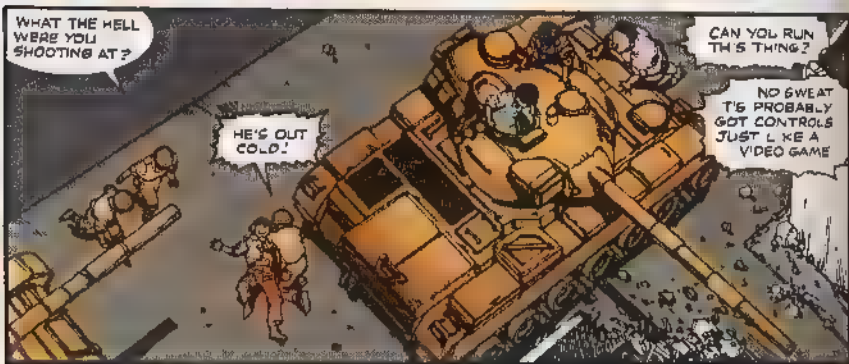
UHM
JHN.



ARE YOU ALL
RIGHT SIR?

THE GUY INSIDE
HERE'S A TOTAL
PINHEAD!

WE CAN DUMP HIM
AND KEEP THE
TANK.



WHAT THE HELL
WERE YOU
SHOOTING AT?

HE'S OUT
COLD!

CAN YOU RUN
TH'S THING?

NO SWEAT
T'S PROBABLY
GOT CONTROLS
JUST LIKE A
VIDEO GAME

WRONG! THE
DRIVER'S
SEAT IS UP
FRONT!

EH?

CHIYOKO
CAN YOU
DRIVE A
TANK?

MEDIC!

YLP

POWER STEERING AND
AUTOMATIC SHIFT.
PIECE OF CAKE

OKAY, KEEP HER IN
LOW GEAR, NICE AND
EASY... LET'S ROLL

HMM?

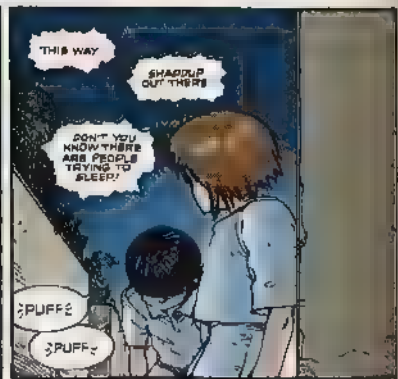
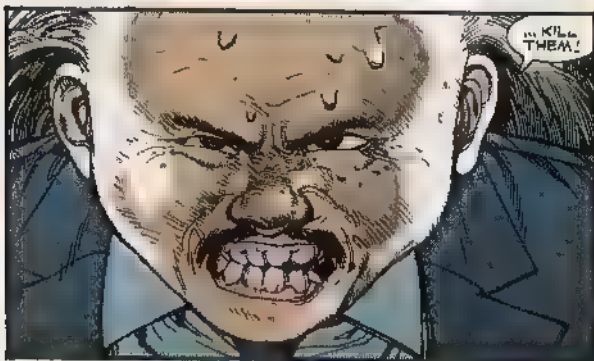
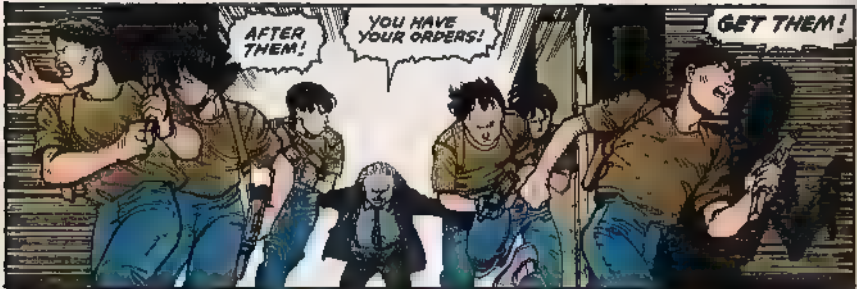
KLUNKLUNKLIN

WHERE DO YOU
THINK YOU'RE
GOING?!

HALT!

ROTATE THE
TURRET, BRING
YOUR NOSE N

SKRRRAE



NEXT ISSUE: **PSYCHIC DUEL**

THE MAKING OF AKIRA

THE EPIC COMIC

PART II—SCRIPTING

The scripting of the Epic version of **Akira** requires a detailed translation and westernization process involving approval by two separate companies and a number of individuals.

Epic Comics first receives the English translation of **Akira** in volumes—each of the five Japanese volumes is 280 to 400 pages each. Epic is sent the translations of the volumes one at a time, as each is completed. Kodansha's translators, Yoko Jmezawa and Linda M. York translate the Japanese to literal, straightforward English. The Kodansha volumes have been divided into 64-page Epic editions by former **Akira** editor Archie Goodwin. Each edition's translation, along with a copy of the issue's artwork, is then sent to Jo Duffy.

Jo Duffy then "Americanizes" the script. The direct, literal translation is often stiff, and the flow of the script, although fine in Japanese, changes entirely when translated.

"An idea that takes three words in Japanese," says Duffy, "may take 10 or 20 words in English."

Also, because of the length of the Epic issues, characters must be re-introduced every 64 pages. American readers should be able to pick up any issue of the series and identify the main characters within the first few pages.

Duffy completes the script, with careful attention to the onomatopoeia of sound effects and an even flow of language. She tries to Americanize **Akira** without taking away from the Japanese elements.



Using her script, Duffy then marks the places on the artwork where the word balloons should go. The script is sent to the Epic offices, where editor Margaret Clark checks it before sending to the staff of Kodansha in Tokyo for approval.

Epic receives the Duffy script back from Kodansha, complete with changes and corrections. The complete script, along with the balloon placements, is then sent to Michael Higgins for lettering.

Higgins draws in new balloons according to the balloon placements he receives from Duffy, and then letters all of the balloons as indicated by the script. **Akira** is unlike most comics in that some word balloons already exist, and he must draw the new balloons to fit with those drawn by Otomo.

"It's a question of balancing the American balloons with the Japanese," he says.

After Higgins returns the lettering to Epic, the lettering and the proofs of the original artwork (see article in **Akira** #13 on "mirror proofs") go into the Marvel "Bullpen" for production. The Bullpenners carefully cut out the word balloons and paste them to the artwork according to Jo Duffy's balloon placements. A copy of the finished artwork with word balloons is then sent, once again, to Kodansha for corrections.

The copy is returned to Epic with corrections. Common problems include word balloon pointers that indicate that the wrong character is speaking, incorrect words or letters, and the occasional word balloon that should have been filled in with artwork before the proofs were made. Periodically, we encounter problems involving reversal, meaning that during the process of making "mirror proofs", a panel or part of a panel was reversed when it should not have been. Finally, when all of the corrections have been made and the staffs of Epic Comics and Kodansha, are satisfied, the black and white artwork is sent to Steve Oliff and Olyoptics for the coloring process.



The same panel, on the "mirror proof" sent to Epic. Mesh-Room has replaced the Japanese balloons with art.

KATSUHIRO OTOMO

writer/illustrator

YASUMITSU SUETAKE

chief assistant to Mr. Otomo

MAKOTO SHIOSAKI

SATOSHI TAKABATAKE

assistants to Mr. Otomo

HIROSHI HIRATA

designer • AKIRA calligraphy

AKIRA SAITO

designer • Kodansha edition

Kodansha Ltd

YOKO UMEZAWA

with **LINDA M. YORK**

translation

KOICHI YURI

editor • Kodansha edition

YUKA ANDO

editorial coordinator • Tokyo

NORIYUKI OKAZAKI

managing editor • New York

Epic Comics

JO DUFFY

english adaptation

STEVE OLIFF

with the

OLYOPTICS COMPUTER CREW

colorists

MICHAEL HIGGINS

letterer

HARRY CANDELARIO

production

MARIE JAVINS

assistant editor

MARGARET CLARK

editor

CARL POTTS

executive editor

Is he really worth it? Is it worth the careers tossed aside in the headlong pursuit of perceived power? Is it worth the cost of exposing young paranormals to the force of martial law meted out by the army? Is it worth bringing down a government and ruining a brilliant military career with a coup d'état? Is it worth the mindless violence and the lives that it has extinguished? Who or what is Akira that so many have been willing to pay the price?

KATSUHIRO OTOMO'S

AKIRA



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X-FUTURE

I love um

I buy um

I preserve um